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Senate to federal judge: Deny mayor's requests, let the process work

LANSING – In response to Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick's request for a federal judge to more than double a multi-million dollar water department contract to a friend without the approval of the Detroit City Council, the Michigan Senate today passed a resolution urging the court to deny the mayor's motion.

"These types of questionable practices have finally got to stop," said state Sen. Laura M. Toy, 6th District, sponsor of legislation currently before the governor to create a regional oversight board for the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department. "Where is the accountability? Now, the department doesn't even want the Detroit City Council to review contract changes."

In addition to asking for an additional \$7.5 million for a friend who is currently an inmate in the Wayne County jail, Kilpatrick asked the judge to increase the salary of DWSD Director Victor Mercado to a staggering \$250,000 a year.

"For those who question the need for some type of regional accountability for the 4 million people who pay for the operations of the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department through their water bills, look no further than this latest attempt to avoid any type of accountability by the current administration in Detroit," said Sen. Toy, who has been working on this issue for four years now and sponsored the resolution.

Sen. Toy also blasted Kilpatrick and the governor for what she describes as "blatantly mischaracterizing her bill to try to justify its veto."

"Senate Bill 372 is not a takeover of the Detroit Water Department by the suburbs," Sen. Toy said. "Governor Granholm and Mayor Kilpatrick can keep saying it until they're blue in the face, but it still doesn't make it so. The city of Detroit would continue to own and be in charge of the department under my bill, this would just add some needed accountability for all ratepayers."

"The oversight board created in my bill could not override decisions made by the current Board of Water Commissioners or the Detroit City Council," Sen. Toy continued. "I encourage residents to log on to www.michiganlegislature.org and type in 'Senate Bill 372' and read the bill for themselves. Then I encourage them to contact the governor and tell her to shine a light on the problems at DWSD by signing it into law."

It is uncertain when U.S. District Judge John Feikens will rule on Kilpatrick's requests. Since Feikens removed Kilpatrick as "special administrator" of the water department in January, the normal process for all water department contracts includes approval by the Detroit City Council.

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Editor's note: Audio comments from Sen. Toy on the resolution are available on the Senate Majority Audiowire at: <http://www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/audiowire/toy/index.htm>